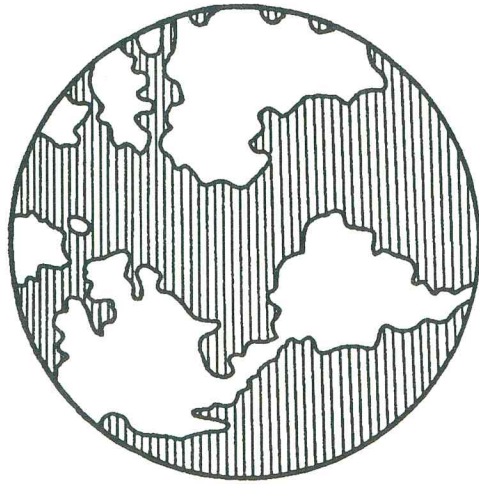


# HEROES



# AT SCHOOL



## A POSITIVE DEMONSTRATION



**Group:** Mrs. Robin Ellenbecker's 5th-grade math class  
**Ages:** 10-12 **Town:** Cheyenne, Wyoming  
**School:** Anderson School **Goal:** Make the community aware of a fast-food restaurant's "pro-environment" record

### WHAT THEY DID

#### *Summary*

In November 1990, Mrs. Ellenbecker's class was learning how to plot points on graphs. One of the sample questions in their textbook used the term "endangered species." The students started talking about the endangered animals in rainforests, and someone said a certain fast-food restaurant bought beef raised on cleared rainforest land.

"We all got riled," says Mrs. Ellenbecker. They decided that fast food restaurants should do business in a way that doesn't harm the Earth. So for a class project, Mrs. Ellenbecker had them survey local fast food restaurants to find out





if they were trying to reduce waste, avoid using styrofoam, etc., then plot the information on graphs.

After dividing into teams and visiting the restaurants, the kids determined which one had the best record. To thank the restaurant, they held a "positive picket" demonstration out in front.

### Results

Their demonstration was on the evening news; it raised the whole community's eco-awareness. "Even my dad started recycling," says Aaron. Best of all, according to student Lindsay Nicholls, they got many of the restaurants to start doing things like recycling and switching from styrofoam to paper packaging.

### HOW THEY DID IT

1. They picked 12 local restaurants. Then they divided into groups; each group was assigned to one restaurant.
2. At each restaurant, the kids asked the manager to answer questions like, "What are you doing to protect the environment?" and "Do you recycle?"
3. The kids also collected each restaurant's packaging materials—cups, clamshell boxes, utensils—to compare with the ones other fast food places used.
4. They glued the materials onto a chart next to a bar graph and plotted the information they'd gathered on the graph.
5. The kids compared graphs and evaluated the restaurants.
6. Someone suggested picketing the worst environmental offender, but student Becky Valdez says, "We didn't want to get sued." So they decided to demonstrate at the place that was doing the *best* job for the Earth.



7. They chose the restaurant with the best environmental record and told the manager the good news. Then they marched in front of the restaurant for 45 minutes, chanting slogans like "Eat here."

### Achievements

They won a contest called "Earth Expo." Three kids received a free trip to the United Nations Earth Inauguration Ceremony in New York on World Environment Day, June 5.

But since the whole class had participated in the project, everyone wanted to attend. So to raise money, they had bake sales, car washes—even a trash "clean-a-thon." They raised enough for everyone to go.

### YOU CAN BE A HERO

*Take an environmental survey of restaurants in your area.*

- Each time you eat at a place, save the packaging materials to compare with other restaurants' materials.
- Student Kyle Dix also suggests making a list of questions to ask the restaurant manager about its environmental record, with space for writing the answers.
- Aaron's advice: "Be thorough, otherwise your data could be wrong. I went to the restaurant I surveyed twice, and the manager got out the restaurant manuals and went through them to answer my questions."

- Compare the amounts of garbage each place produces, how much it recycles, etc. Then decide which restaurants are the best and let your family and friends know the winners.

